

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 000191

SIPDIS

NSC FOR MCLEAN
AF/RA FOR BITTRICK
AF/W FOR BOOTH
AF/PD FOR SKOP, SANDERS
CJCS FOR HEIMERLE
OSD-PA FOR AFIS (BERNATH)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/23/2012
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [MARR](#) [KPAO](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: THE BILATERAL MILITARY RELATIONSHIP
CONTINUES TO IMPROVE

REF: 01 ABUJA 2072

Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter; Reasons 1.5 (b/d).

[11.](#) (C) SUMMARY: While problems remain in the U.S. bilateral military relationship with Nigeria, significant signs of improvement are evident. The relationship between the Embassy and Ministry of Defense has improved as a result of the February 2001 creation of Minister of State positions for each Service. Closer coordination between the Ministry and the Services appears to be the result, leading to fewer instances of bureaucratic inertia hindering bilateral efforts. The new Service Chiefs are more open and available than the old, and at least on the face of it, appear to closely follow the directions and intent of the civilian government. The MPRI team has had greater success in recent months in working with their counterparts and senior officials. The different levels of cooperation seen between Phase 1 and Phase 3 of Operation Focus Relief epitomize these changes. END SUMMARY.

=====

SLOW CHANGE, BUT CHANGE JUST THE SAME

=====

[12.](#) (C) We have seen real progress in our military relationship with Nigeria in a number of areas. This is in part due to the level of engagement over the last year, through OFR, MPRI and our general security assistance (SA) programs. It is also due to the key input of some new cooperative players (the Army Minister and new Service Chiefs), and the removal of some others (particularly the testy former Chief of Army Staff).

[13.](#) (C) Even so, problems remain in the bilateral military relationship with Nigeria, and will not go away quickly. Civilian authority over the military is still being established, bureaucratic inertia and slipshod coordination between the MOD and Services remains problematic, and the desire among many to shrug off assistance in favor of contracts where kickbacks are available continue to hamper assistance efforts. Emerging from a history of military governments where the Chief of Army Staff was essentially number three in the national decision-making chain-of-command, and often appointed Ministers (including the Minister of Defense), Nigeria is working to establish civilian control of the military. This is a sensitive area, and the GON is proceeding cautiously. The Services resist accountability to the Ministry, and some Ministry officials remain focused on money-making from contracts rather than genuine reform. Furthermore, real engagement between the MOD (read Federal Government) and the National Assembly remains tenuous. This hinders national defense planning and force development.

=====

DEFENSE COOPERATION - BABY STEPS

=====

[14.](#) (C) A biweekly defense cooperation meeting between the Office of Defense Cooperation, Ministry of Defense and Services, was created by the DATT to improve defense cooperation communication (Reftel). The biweeklies, used to discuss FMS/FMF cases, IMET and other assistance programs, have brought about progress in SA and have improved Nigerian understanding of SA programs. Additionally, a week-long DISAM security assistance workshop has begun for Ministry of Defense and Service members. Initial attendance at the workshop is around 30 people, a number that reflects genuine

interest within the Ministry and Services.

15. (C) At a November biweekly meeting, while reviewing upcoming IMET courses with members of the MOD and Services, it was revealed that one Army course had been cancelled, and that three other Army slots were at risk, for lack of nominees. Expressing profound dissatisfaction, the Army representative demanded to know why MOD was sending Army nomination letters to the office of the Chief of Defense Staff, rather than to the Army. (COMMENT: Normally, proper procedure dictates that a written letter is delivered to the Army Staff from the Joint Services Department (JSD) through the Chief of Defense Staff (CDS), and the reply to ODC must go through the CDS and DIA. If this procedure is not followed, the Army will not take action for fear of the CDS's wrath. Previously, these meetings could not occur, as the Acting ODC Chief, like the DATT, was not allowed direct contact with the Ministry or Services without DIA approval, which often took weeks to receive. END COMMENT.)

16. (C) General dissatisfaction was expressed at the lack of timely action by the Office of the CDS. After some hand wringing over "proper procedure," the group decided that all course offerings would be sent directly to the Service for action, with an info copy to the CDS. In subsequent meetings, this decision was reversed, but the spirit of speeding the process by bypassing delays remained. Additionally, the DATT has suggested to the Services that a biweekly meeting be held at their level to discuss Service-specific issues. Thus far, only the Air Force has responded favorably.

=====

OPERATION FOCUS RELIEF -
A BILATERAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE

=====

17. (C) The positive change in the relationship is perhaps most visibly exemplified by Operation Focus Relief (OFR). Planning and executing Phase 1 of the program, which trained and equipped two Nigerian battalions, were extremely labor intensive and difficult. While the units themselves, grudgingly at first, accepted the training and benefited tremendously, the civilian GON had a difficult time driving the program forward. Although approved by the President himself, and supported (with varying degrees of enthusiasm) by Minister of Defense Danjuma, National Security Advisor Aliyu Mohammed and Chief of Defense Staff Admiral Ibrahim Ogohi, the Army hierarchy, controlled by (then) Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General S. Victor Malu, did everything possible to block successful execution. Pressure was placed on brigade and battalion commanders by the Army Chief to cause delays in the program. In fact, the relationship during Phase 1 was so difficult that Nigeria was not included in Phase 2. A high-level meeting between senior USG and GON Officials in April 2001 was required to settle numerous issues raised by the Chief of Army Staff in his effort to derail engagement.

18. (C) However, after each Service got its own Minister of State (Deputy Minister) in February and the retirement of the three Service Chiefs in June 2001, cooperation between the Embassy and GON on defense-related programs improved tremendously. Chief of Defense Staff Admiral Ibrahim Ogohi acted like a weathervane. Ogohi, who had been reasonably supportive of engagement when not in Malu's presence but whose support went south when Malu was around, became a strong supporter with the appointment of the new Deputy Ministers and Service Chiefs. Execution of Phase 3 became a cooperative venture between the GON, Nigerian military and USG. The new Chief of Army Staff, LTG Alexander Ogomudia, warmly welcomed the 3SFG 3 Battalion Commander during his initial visit, approved the Program of Instruction (POI), addressed concerns of his staff, and even suggested a joint U.S.-Nigerian Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) visit to the Phase 1 troops in Sierra Leone. After stating he had not approved participation of one of the three battalions selected for Phase 3, he immediately reversed course and approved their inclusion when he learned that camp construction had already begun. Public Affairs coordination between the Embassy and the Defense Headquarters bloomed soon after Minister Danjuma's assent to a public affairs workshop that exposed the senior Public Relations Officers of the Nigerian Services to conventional military public affairs doctrine.

19. (C) Throughout OFR Phase 3, the GON and Nigerian Army were supportive and flexible. In response to September 11, the Army increased force protection to the U.S. trainers. The Air Force provided space for a logistics and administrative

Forward Operating Base (FOB) and was responsive and supportive of medical evacuation contingencies. The Army opened its doors to the DATT in ways not seen in Nigeria for at least a decade.

=====
COMMENT: A WHOLE NEW WORLD
=====

10. (C) COMMENT: While these changes perhaps appear small from an outside perspective, they are significant for defense cooperation in Nigeria. For almost two years, all correspondence had to go through Nigerian DIA. This blockage was removed by Army Minister Batagarawa (reftel). When the office of the CDS was not acting in a timely fashion on IMET courses, mid-ranking officers and MOD staff sought to circumvent the blockage. For mid-ranking officers to bargain for slots and usurp the province of the CDS is unheard of in this "big man" culture. The biggest stakeholders in this process, the Services, now appear to be taking a stand, to the benefit of the IMET program.

11. (C) COMMENT CONT: Many problems, such as the MOD's inability to complete the OFR MOI (until very near the end of OFR Phase 3) or pay the remaining FY01 MPRI amount in a timely manner, remain and are visible reminders of the need for further significant reform. However, there is a beneficial aspect to security assistance and programs like OFR that should not be overlooked. Years of military rule, ironically, caused the Ministry and Services to atrophy. By pushing U.S. defense cooperation programs through the Nigerian bureaucratic process, the pipes are being cleared of blockages. Moreover, the MOD and the Services are starting to see and respond to the benefits of U.S. assistance. Graft is difficult with U.S. programs. This was a disincentive to those who might have supported engagement with the U.S. However, the qualitative improvement in capabilities (as seen with OFR) appears to have convinced many in the MOD and Services to reassess the costs and benefits of engagement. They appear to have come to the conclusion that, even with the loss of graft, engagement with the United States is worthwhile.

12. (C) DAO COMMENT: Despite the new era of cooperation, the security assistance program, the largest in sub-Saharan Africa, is behind schedule. This is due to the earlier problems and lack of access and information exchange. Basically, the FMF program is one year behind schedule. However, since the majority of these assistance cases have been designed by the DATT to be "roll-over" year-to-year cases, the LOAs can be extended rather than regenerated. Such cases include: C-130 technical assistance, spare parts, safety and other publications and training; U.S. Coast Guard Balsam-Class Buoy Tenders exchange; MPRI; and the combat simulation center. Given the improving relationship, it would be unfortunate and counter-productive if the Nigeria FMF budget were redirected. END DAO COMMENT.
Jeter